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ABSTRACT

An effort to assess the concerns of freshmen entering the University of South Carolina was needed to provide guidance in the planning and implementation of a total service program for freshmen. Since the orientation program provides the opportunity for all entering students to gather according to their respective classifications, the mission to assess concerns was expanded to include new regional campus and transfer students. Sixteen statements of concern were agreed upon, and a degree-of-importance instrument was constructed. For freshmen, the 5 most prevalent concerns were advisement, registration, career planning assistance, study skills, and being able to take courses when needed. Regional students listed as their 5 most important concerns advisement, being able to take courses when needed, registration, transportation, and how much money it costs to live and study. Finally transfer students indicated their 5 most important concerns to be advisement, registration, being able to take courses when needed, transferability of credit, and transportation. (HS)

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University of South Carolina

Division of Student Affairs

Subject: Entry Level Concerns of New Regional, Transfer, and Freshmen Students at the University of South Carolina, January, 1973

Research Notes Nr. 12-73

March 25, 1973

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Division of Student Affairs

Research Note
No. 12-73

March 25, 1973

SUBJECT: Entry Level Concerns of New Regional, Transfer, and Freshman Students at the University of South Carolina, January, 1973

Nature and Scope of the Study:

In effort to assess the concerns of Freshmen entering the University of South Carolina was needed to provide guidance in the planning and implementation of a total service program for Freshmen. Since the orientation program provides the opportunity for all entering students to gather according to their respective classifications, the mission to assess concerns was expanded to include new Regional Campus and Transfer students. An entry level needs instrument developed by students in consultation with Freshman Services Staff was administered at the spring orientation program to Freshmen, Transfers, and Regional Campus Students. Not all entering students attended the initial orientation meetings; however, 301 Freshmen, 79 Transfers, and 74 Regional Students completed the opinionaires: in each case more than enough to provide a viable sample of the entering groups.

THE INSTRUMENT:

Upon consultation with representatives of these three student groups, it was decided to construct an instrument that would assess students' concerns at the entry level: as a new student views his college life/program at the point of initial enrollment. After considerable discussion with students, sixteen statements of concern were agreed upon, and a "Q" sort (degree of importance) instrument was constructed. The Research Committee

of the Division of Student Affairs suggested some modifications of the instrument which were adopted.

The pilot of the instrument with currently enrolled students indicated that one change was necessary in regard to transfer students. A concern for the transfer of credits was suggested as a replacement for a statement expressing concern about the adequacy of a student's study skills to insure success at U.S.C. The feeling was that transfer students from other institutions had proven themselves academically and that a much higher order concern was that of credit transferability. This substitution was made on the transfer student form.

TREATMENT:

By assigning a score to each of the seven importance levels (see Figure 1) from 7 (most important) to 1 (least important) a total score for each statement could be determined. That total score was then divided by the number of completed questionnaires in the group. The result was a weighted mean for each statement. Arranging these weighted means from high to low results in an entry level concern hierarchy.

"My Sort Response Grid"

One Most Important	Two Next Important	Three Next Important	Four Next Important	Three Next Important	Two Next Important	One Least Important
7 (weighting)	6	5	4	3	2	1

FIGURE 1.

FINDINGS:

Tables 1, 2, and 3 which follow represent the concern hierarchies.

TABLE 1.

ENTRY LEVEL CONCERNS- NON RESIDENT

5.50 Advisement
5.50 Registration
5.35 Career Planning assistance
5.25 Study skills
4.66 Being able to take courses when needed
4.59 Selection a major
4.52 Availability of financial aid and part-time jobs
4.13 Transportation
3.93 How much money it costs to live and study
3.60 Making friends
3.38 Social activities
3.15 Meals
3.12 Housing and getting along with roommate
2.95 Health problems
2.30 Personal problems - such as drugs or alcohol
2.29 Sex

TABLE 2.

ENTRY LEVEL CONCERNS: RESIDENT STUDENTS

5.71 Advisement
5.35 Being able to take courses when needed
5.17 Registration
4.72 Transportation
4.53 How much money it costs to live and study
4.50 Career planning assistance
4.31 Availability of financial aid and part-time jobs
4.27 Study skills
3.59 Making friends
3.50 Meals
3.47 Housing and getting along with roommate
3.34 Social activities
3.31 Selection a major
2.87 Health problems
2.56 Personal problems such as drugs and alcohol
2.53 Sex

TABLE 3.

ENTRY LEVEL CONCERNS: TRANSFER STUDENTS

5.52 Advisement
5.35 Registration
5.25 Being able to take courses when needed
5.14 Transferability of credit
4.66 Transportation
4.52 Career planning assistance
4.08 How much money it costs to live and study
3.93 Meals
3.73 Availability of financial aid and part-time jobs
3.62 Social activities
3.61 Making friends
3.52 Selecting a major
3.11 Housing and getting along with roommate
3.09 Health problems
2.55 Sex
2.24 Personal problems such as drugs or alcohol

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS:

This research was completed in the context of a student being at the threshold of his U.S.C. experience and reflects his entry level concern hierarchy only. The suggestion here is that this concern pattern, or hierarchy, will likely change to some extent as a student progresses at Carolina. However, the hierarchy does demonstrate that there are some legitimate concerns known entering students to which the university must address itself. These concerns tend to fall into 2 categories: those that can be dealt with in a short time span and those that encompass a lengthier time frame. For example, advisement and registration are intensely felt short term concerns. It should not be concluded that a short term concern is unimportant. On the contrary, intensely felt short term concerns require the greatest effort at the entry level to facilitate a student's successful beginning at the University.

Short term examples are registration and advisement because they tend to occur at the beginning of a term and then, in many cases, terminate until the pre-exam period or the next term. Concerns that can be dealt with over a longer term such as career planning and improving study skills are, of course, important to student success and satisfaction, too.

It is interesting to note that our consulting group of currently enrolled Freshman, Regional Campus students, and Transfers agreed on 15 of 16 entry level needs (see above for the only difference among transfers). The point is that not only do our entering students in each category arrange these concerns in a nearly similar manner, but at the outset our currently enrolled students in each category agreed on the same entry level concerns. In short, there is a further suggestion that our entering students at all undergraduate levels tend to think similarly when assessing their Carolina experience at the entry level.